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BOARD APPROVES RIDLEY-THOMAS' CALL FOR COMPREHENSIVE DATA ON CHILD FATALITIES

LOS ANGELES – Following a vigorous discussion over the past several weeks about the need for detailed data regarding child fatalities in Los Angeles County, the Board approved Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas' motion today requiring a thorough analysis and release of such child fatality data for years prior to 2008.

"While the Department of Children and Family Services has been collecting valuable data on child fatalities for the past two years, I believe it is essential for us as decision makers to have a much clearer picture of this data over a longer period of time so that we know not only what is occurring now, but what the trends have been in recent years so that as decision makers we can develop policies to bring this urgent crisis to an end," said Ridley-Thomas.

The motion passed by the Board today requires DCFS to submit a detailed report back to the Board detailing numbers, causes and circumstances of children's deaths from 1990 to 2010.

"From the data that is available to us today, I find it extremely difficult to make thorough policy judgments when the data does not differentiate between a child who has died as the result of improper treatment at home and a child who has died as the result of a gang shooting," added the Supervisor.

"Only when we know the complete answers to these questions can we establish policies that will direct the leadership of DCFS and other agencies to employ practices that will

quickly and efficiently bring an end to avoidable child fatalities in our community. I believe that the data required by today's motion will allow us to make better decisions regarding not only the types of efforts that are required, but the geographical differences that may exist which may impact decisions as to where resources should be employed," said Ridley-Thomas.

At a minimum, the required data will include the total number of fatalities involving children with DCFS histories (either reported or substantiated abuse or neglect) for each year, along with such information as the cause of death, age of the child and whether the child resided with family or in foster care.

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